

THE ORGANIZER

September 2010 • Issue #24

Jimmy John's Workers Form Union, Demand an End to "Wages So Low You'll Freak"

Twin Cities Jimmy John's workers have had enough. Low wages, poor treatment by management and a lack of basic decency have lead them to organize the Jimmy John's Workers Union to stand up for their rights. The workers are demanding that their management recognize the union and negotiate with them immediately. The Jimmy John's franchise, owned by MikLin Enterprises, which the union says pays "wages so low you'll freak," operates nine stores, seven in Minneapolis and two in St. Louis Park with plans to expand by nearly fifty percent in the next two years.



Photo Courtesy of, Matt Miranda.

When Palmer Johnson, a delivery biker at the downtown Minneapolis skyway Jimmy John's heard about the expensive golf trips that the owners of his franchise had been taking overseas, he could barely believe it. "Here the workers are on food stamps, and the owners keep getting richer," he says. Working at Jimmy John's for three years, Johnson thinks that it's time for equality and respect for workers at his store. "I'm here for delivery drivers like myself," he says, "but even more for the in-shoppers who make sandwiches. I want to see them be treated better. The workers, many of whom make minimum wage, are demanding higher wages and tip jars in their stores.

"We live in a service economy these days," says Jake Foucault, a delivery driver at the Dinkytown and Riverside stores, "we've been pushed into these jobs, but they don't need to be like this." Consistent scheduling is also difficult to come by, with workers complaining of shifts as short as one or two hours or having hours drastically cut for no apparent reason. "Our union is a tool to change the power on the job between the workers and the people making the money," notes Foucault.

Conditions at the sandwich shops are also an important part of the workers' demands. Employ-

ees must find replacements when they are sick, which means that workers report frequently being forced to serve food to customers while ill. Basic dignity is an issue for Jaim'ee Bolte, an in-shopper at the 9th St store. "There is no paid training for new employees and new hires need to pay for their uniforms with their own paycheck, meaning that their earnings drop below minimum wage," she says. For her, conditions at work need to be improved. "My co-

workers and I are having issues. The union is a great way to get everyone treated fairly, especially on issues like sick days and fair scheduling."

The Jimmy John's Workers Union, part of an international union, the Industrial Workers of the World, plans on standing up to change the deplorable conditions that its members face. Ayo Collins, a delivery biker at the 9th St store, thinks the union is important because it means having a say on the job. "I would like to see owner cooperation during negotiations," he says, "I hope that they will be reasonable. I want to be listened to." Union members are

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pushing for MikLin Enterprises to recognize them as the representatives of the workers at the franchise and negotiate around improving the problems that workers have put forward. As Bolte puts it, "We want our co-workers to have a sense of dignity at work and a sense of solidarity with each other."

-John O'Reilly



Photo, Matt Miranda.

Editorial-A Better Future for Restaurant and Service Workers

After taking a break from the Organizer to focus on other branch initiatives, The Organizer is back and just in time to celebrate a major first for the Twin Cities branch. I am functioning as the interim editor for this issue, and elections will be held for editor of the Organizer at next month's GMB on Tuesday, October 5th.

As our first fast-food restaurant campaign goes public this week, I'm proud of the hard work that our fellow workers have put in to reach out to workers within the restaurant and service industry and build campaigns in workplaces that are seen by other unions as unworthy or unprofitable to organize.

I've worked in restaurants and service jobs for the last fourteen years, starting at McDonald's at 14 up until the present day as a barista at Starbucks.

Working in the restaurant and service industry is often a thankless job where we are not appreciated by our bosses (no surprise there!) and often, the general public. While perceptions are starting to change, often people think of us as the "deserving poor", people that don't have enough initiative to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and get an education. With the current inflation of college graduates, people are reentering the workforce only to find themselves working in these low-wage, "temporary" jobs and barely affording to pay their rent let alone student loans. Many of us, myself included, have at least a four year college degree and are struggling to meet their basic needs. But really, why should anyone be denied a living wage, while others steal the profits that we make for them daily?

The IWW's commitment to organizing ALL workers is what drew me into joining the union. Thinking about the thousands of workers that continue to organize on the shopfloor is what keeps me inspired and empowered to keep fighting to make low-wages and terrible work conditions a thing of the past.

This issue of the Organizer focuses on the restaurant and service industry and provides perspectives from fellow workers in the industry as well as an economic analysis. Prepare to be inspired and I hope to see you all out on the picket line!

- FW Angel Gardner



THE ORGANIZER

A monthly publication of the Twin Cities General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World.

The IWW is a union for all workers, dedicated to organizing on the job for better conditions today, and a world without bosses tomorrow.

You are invited to contact the Branch Secretary-Treasurer or any Delegate listed below for no-pressure conversations about your issues on the job.

Branch Contacts

Twin Cities IWW
79 13th Avenue NE
Suite 103A
Minneapolis, MN 55413

Tel. (612) 378-8845
email: twincities@iww.org
web: twincities.iww.org
facebook: Twin Cities IWW

Branch Secretary-Treasurers

Arella Vargas
avargas1@macalester.edu

Erik Davis erik@riseup.net

Editor

Angel Gardner

Policy

Stories, letters to the editors, and belly-aching can be addressed to tc-organizer@riseup.net

Unless otherwise stated, the opinions expressed are not necessarily the official position of the local branch or the union as a whole.

Many of our members are engaged in active organizing campaigns, and some use an alias, occasionally their union card number, or 'x' number. We prefer transparency over secrecy whenever possible, but will always honor requests for anonymity.

Why Organize Sandwich Shops?

So you know how it is, you get a job after searching for months and initially you're pretty happy. You've got a paycheck coming in, you're meeting new people and learning how to do all the different types of work, memorize the sandwiches, and are able to make a sandwich in well, 30 seconds or faster, which generally takes anywhere from between 4 and 12 months to learn.

At first, work doesn't seem too bad, your co-workers are pretty cool, and you know, you got bills to pay, right? And then it hits you. *Wages so low you'll freak*. You're getting paid minimum wage, \$7.25 an hour, and it's not enough to get by. You begin to notice other things that don't seem quite right. Your managers scream at you for little to no reason, which is scary, because they also make clear that you can be fired at anytime for any reason. Your schedule keeps changing, so you never know when you work or how much money you'll be making. You have to cover your own shifts which means calling all over the place to try to go home for a funeral or to not go into work sick. Often you end up working sick, serving food to hundreds of people. You find out that even though you make hundreds of sandwiches in your shift, you're not going to get a free one for yourself. When just when you think things couldn't get any worse, your manager is sexually harassing you or enacting policies that stink of racism even if you can't quite put your finger on it. You see tons of money coming in from the hard work you're doing and you're freaking, because your wage is so low a paycheck ain't covering rent, and if you don't deliver, you don't even get tips.

You may think that this job is temporary and you can put up with all the crap you deal with until you find another job, but when there's no guarantee you'll get enough money to pay your rent or buy groceries, you realize that it's time to fight for a change. Maybe no one plans to do these jobs for life, but our lives and our families depend on them, and so do millions of other people. In fact, as of 2010, the restaurant industry employs more people than any other private sector industry in the United States, growing every year, and unlike other industries it has only been growing in profits through this recession. Fast-food joints often justified paying employees low-wages because most of their employees were teenagers and didn't need the money, but times have changed. Almost no one who works in our franchise is a teenager, and lots of people are in their mid to late 20s, and even 30s and 40s are working and coming in to apply for jobs, because it's hard out to find a decent job anywhere these days.

We're in a situation where we have to make the changes happen here. That means, organizing, unioniz-

ing, taking action, and improving conditions. We want to know when we're working, we want to make enough money to live on, we want time off when we're sick, we want job security, we want respect and dignity on the job

Everyone deserves these things, this is a just a starting point. Our campaign is steadily expanding. Nine stores in the Twin Cities have a public union presence and we're reaching out to other stores throughout the Metro Area. To get involved and join our fight for better wages and conditions, please contact the local Twin Cities IWW. We appreciate the support of our fellow workers and community members as we move forward with our campaign.
-FW David Boehnke

Starbucks Baristas in Omaha Unite, Walk Off the Job to Deliver Demands

On August 5, 2010, Starbucks workers in downtown Omaha, Nebraska, walked off the floor. Amid a supportive crowd of their regular customers, the baristas announced their membership in the IWW Starbucks Workers Union and delivered a list of demands to their boss.

The demands included a reversal to all budget cuts made by the company in recent years, which have put increasing pressure on workers who rely on the job for healthcare. Throughout the recession, Starbucks has doubled the cost of healthcare, closed stores, laid off workers, and cut staffing

to a bare minimum. Despite claiming these actions as necessary during a recession, the company recently posted their most profitable quarter to date, pocketing \$207.9 million.

The campaign in Omaha marks the latest in fed-up baristas organizing on the job, following Starbucks workers in Fort Worth, Texas, announcing their OBU membership last December. With the campaign growing rapidly, spreading from city to city, it's only a matter of time before the company must stop ignoring its workers and capitulate to their demands.

On a personal note, I recently was given the chance to travel to Omaha and meet some of the baristas involved in the Omaha organizing. In addition to being very lovely and hospitable people, they are doing some incredibly good organizing, and I'm amazed by the hard work and solidarity they continue to put forth as their campaign moves forward.

Wobblies in Omaha are also forming their very own General Membership Branch to support local organizing. As a fledgling branch, they could use our help and support, so stay tuned for more information on how you can support Omaha Wobs and Starbucks workers! -x359203



Editor's Note: The IWW Starbucks Workers Union is a grassroots organization of over 300 current and former employees at the

world's largest coffee chain united for secure work hours and a living wage. The union has members throughout the United States and Canada fighting for systemic change at the company and remedying individual grievances with management.

Union baristas, bussers, and shift supervisors have fought successfully toward improved scheduling and staffing levels, increased wages, and workplace safety. Workers who join the union have immediate access to co-workers and members of the community who will struggle with them for a better life on the job.



Lessons From The Shopfloor : Solidarity Against Sexism

If there's anything I've learned from working in the restaurant and retail industry for over fourteen years, it's that sexual harassment and sexism in the workplace is an issue that hasn't gone away. Perhaps you've become more tolerant of being sexually objectified. Maybe you're afraid that being uncomfortable with sexual advances or comments means you're a prude or hopelessly outdated. Sexual harassment and sexism are all about power. We feel uncomfortable about standing up for ourselves in these situations because to do so questions power relations, not only in the workplace but in society in general.

Is it sexual harassment or sexism in the workplace?

- A district manager asks you and your forty year old female-identified coworker, "Will you girls make us some coffee for our meeting?"

- Your manager makes all the women in the coworkers wear a tight babydoll t-shirts intentionally a size too small that say, "For a Good Time Call ..." with the store number on it while the men are told to wear plain black polo shirts that do not have to be form-fitting.

- During your training at a retail clothing store, you are told to flirt with potential customers to make sales. You feel uncomfortable with this and despite your efforts to be proactive about sales in a professional way, you are pulled aside later for not being "friendly enough".

- A conventionally-attractive regular customer often sits at the bar and stares at you throughout your shift and has made several comments about your appearance that make you uncomfortable. When you tell him to stop, he tells you you should be flattered. Your boss fails to act and your other coworkers appreciate his attention and tell you that you're strange for not liking it.

The answer? If any of these policies, attitudes or behavior make you feel uncomfortable, then you shouldn't have to deal with it. Everyone's comfort level is different. Some of your coworkers might not mind being called "girl" or "sweetie", while others may take offense to being referred to as a "woman" or a gender-specific pronoun. Different expectations for employee uniforms that force coworkers into stereotyped gender roles is a sexist practice that creates a potentially hostile workplace. Flirting with customers should never be a given, but a choice. Berating others for what makes them uncomfortable promotes an environment of harassment.

When faced with sexism and/or sexual harassment in the workplace, going the legal route isn't always the best or only option. Collectively standing up together with your coworkers against sexist practices, policies or individuals can often be the safest and most powerful way to fight. Though it's

technically illegal, it's easier for companies to retaliate against an individual than a group of workers. In addition, sexual harassment cases often result in companies dragging women through the mud and end up further traumatizing the victim. Legal processes can take a long time to resolve, but taking direct action in your workplace is immediate.

How do I fight sexism and harassment in my workplace?

- Form a coalition with coworkers who share and/or are sympathetic to your concerns. Sexual harassment affects union and non-union members alike, so don't exclude any possible allies.
- Ban customers and clients who are repeat offenders from the store and make sure that the ban is being enforced by the rest of your coworkers.
- Confront your boss as a group about sexual harassment issues (perhaps even a definition) and make it known that you take it very seriously and so should they.
- Confront workers who refuse to support their fellow workers when they feel harassed, violated, or uncomfortable. Have one-on-one conversations about the impact of their actions (not respecting boundaries) and words ("it's not a big deal..." and express your feelings in a genuine, but professional manner.
- Any policy, dress code, or expectations that fellow workers find to be sexist should be addressed, regardless of whether or not you've reached consensus. If you're required by your job to wear a tight babydoll t-shirt, but men can wear polos, you should be able to wear a polo if you don't want to wear the t-shirt.

No one should have to deal with a hostile work environment. By supporting each other, we can make sure everyone is comfortable and is treated with respect and dignity. When workers come together to fight sexual harassment and sexism, we are empow-

ered by taking back the workplace and grow closer relationships with our coworkers by building mutual trust and respect for one another.
-FW Angel Gardner

Economic Suicide in the Service Sector

Here we sit, trying to figure out how to get out of this mess. The mess of no jobs, or just shitty jobs with low wages and no benefits, and no decent health care system, education costs skyrocketing, a relentless recession, and the environment going to hell.

We try to understand. Like archeologists, we dig through the layers of propaganda, media distortions and just plain bullshit. We keep digging, trying to calm the growing nausea, until, just before hitting impenetrable rock, we find a key, the key of cause and effect.

Let's give the key of cause and effect a try on the topic of this issue of the Organizer, the prevalence of low-wage service jobs. Why is it that so many of the jobs available – if any jobs are available at all – are low-wage service jobs?

There are, in one way of looking at things, two types of jobs – those involved in the production of goods, and those involved in the production of services. The production of goods is the process of creating, out of raw materials and labor, tangible objects that people can buy and use. The production of services is the sale of direct human actions to serve other people's needs and wants.

It is simply a historical fact that the percentage of service jobs in the U.S. economy has increased over recent decades. Like all phenomena, this is an effect that is caused by other factors. What are the causes?

One major cause is globalization. If I produce goods, those goods can be transported because they have physical form. I can produce goods in Mexico or China or wherever, and then ship those goods to the place where I want to sell them, say, Minneapolis, MN. Services, on the other hand, cannot be transported. A barista in China cannot hand me a medium soy chai if I'm in Minneapolis. So globalization cannot affect services the same way it affects manufacturing.

Someone who wants to invest money in the process of production (a capitalist) will try to invest it where he or she will get the highest rate of profit. (Just as, if I've managed to save a bit of money, I will look for a savings account that will give me the highest interest rate.) One of the primary ways to increase the rate of profit is to lower the wages of workers. So those investing in

manufacturing have moved much of the manufacturing process to countries where they can pay the lowest wages.

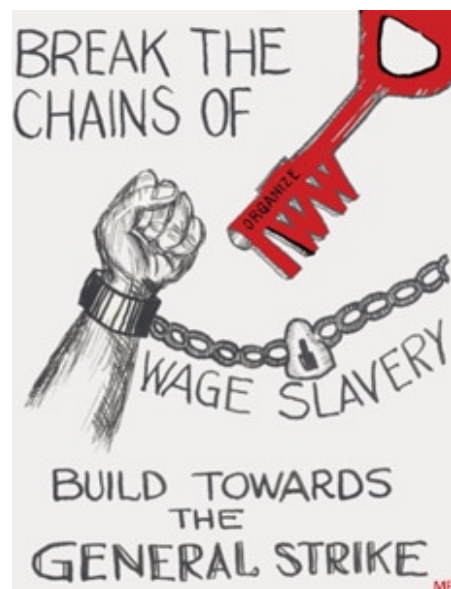
But only so much can be invested in manufacturing. So capitalists also invest in the service industry. Service jobs have to stay in the place where the service is provided. With manufacturing jobs leaving and service jobs staying, the net effect is that service jobs make up an increasing proportion of available employment in the U.S.

A second reason for the relative increase in service jobs comes about because of the massive redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich in recent decades. Poor people tend to spend a high percentage of their income on necessary goods – food, clothes, etc. As wealth increases, the percentage of income spent on basic goods decreases – a family can only buy so much stuff – and the amount spent on hotels, restaurants and other services increases. This demand for services causes the proportion of service jobs to increase.

Of course, capitalists who invest in services also hope to make the most profit, and therefore try to minimize wages and benefits. Because they can't move service jobs out of the country, they must find other ways to keep wages low, something at which they have been pretty successful up until now.

The thing is, the movement of cause into effect doesn't end at any historical point. It continues on, each effect becoming a cause in its turn. So we can continue our investigation and look at the effect that is caused by having the U.S. job market increasingly dominated by low-wage service jobs.

In one sense the capitalists get what they want. A massive redistribution of wealth from the poor



to the rich has been occurring in this country over the last few decades. This massive movement of wealth has created some problems, though.

First, the capitalists get increasingly desperate to find new things to do with their money. They have far too much to simply reinvest it all in business. Not much goes to taxes anymore, either. So they invest more and more in financial speculation, like the housing market, the stock market, etc. But eventually their Ponzi schemes begin to collapse.

Second, workers have less and less capability to buy the goods and services that the capitalists hope to sell in the U.S. market. Workers can use credit for a time, but the lack of real income eventually hits home, and no one can buy anything anymore. With insufficient demand for products, production slows, workers get laid off, and a recession hits.

Combining a recession of insufficient market demand with the collapse of the financial sector, we get the Great Recession. The capitalists acquire more wealth, but tank the economy in the process. We're heading for the double dip of the Great Recession, and there's no end in sight.

-FW Joel Schwartz

LABOR DAY

RESTAURANT WORKERS, SERVICE WORKERS

ALL WORKERS

SPEAK OUT!

Since the Recession began in 2008, corporate elites have squeezed all workers with layoffs, pay cuts, reduced staffing, reduced work hours, and demands for more productivity while Corporate America rakes in billions in profit.

As the economy crumbles, good jobs are harder and harder to find. Today, 40% of workers in the US work in the food, retail, and service sector. Workers in these industries typically face poverty wages, inconsistent scheduling, no access to affordable healthcare or time off when we are sick, racial, gender, and other forms of discrimination, no breaks, disrespect from our bosses, and harassment from customers. Everyday bosses seek to take more from us. Every day we struggle to support ourselves and our families.

But we refuse to be powerless. As workers we can organize to confront economic, racial, and gender injustice. The time has come to demand basic economic rights; fair wages, fair treatment in the workplace, sick days, fair scheduling, a voice on the job. Only through a grass roots, democratic movement can we accomplish these goals and build towards a society where common sense and justice align. We call upon service workers, retail workers, ALL workers, SPEAK OUT on Labor Day!



Join Us at the Labor Day Rally!

Labor Day: Restaurant Workers, Service Workers, All Workers Speak Out!
Featuring Guante and I Self Devine

When? 3pm Monday September 6th
University and Pleasant Ave in Minneapolis

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3:00pm Meet up
3:30pm Speak Out/ Music
4:30pm Mobilize!

Hope to see you there! -Twin Cities IWW



Upcoming Events.

IWW International General Convention
September 4th at 9 AM-6PM, September 5th 9AM-5PM. Elected delegates will vote on proposals presented by various branches of the IWW. Caucuses will be meeting as well to discuss special projects (such as the Women's Caucus) ..Come to see democracy in action and meet Wobblies from all over the world. Dinner and festivities to follow on Saturday. The convention will be held at Macalester College in St. Paul. For more information, please contact us via e-mail or on Facebook.

Labor Day Rally
September 6th at 3:00 PM See article above for more details. University of Minnesota Knoll Center, University and Pleasant Avenue., Minneapolis.

General Membership Branch Meeting
September 7th at 7:00 PM Monthly business meeting for the IWW Twin Cities General membership Branch. Come vote on where your dues are spent! All members have a vote. Twin Cities IWW Office, Grain Belt Bottling House, 79 13th Ave NE, Suite 103A, Minneapolis.

The Twin Cities IWW wishes you a Happy Labor Day!

